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ABSTRACT

A professional library for inservice education of teachers can be useful in founding a Teaching of Reading Book Club. The Teaching of Reading Book Club, in time and sequentially, needs to become a community of learners in studying, assessing, and trying out new, recommended approaches in reading instruction. Knowing how these trial runs in new procedures work in improving the reading curriculum is a must. The Club can indeed work well through collaboration, cooperation, and unity of vision. Purpose for meeting regularly and desiring to improve the reading curriculum from what is to what it should be are admirable goals. Thus, a normative approach in the teaching of reading involves seeking, searching, and finding that which works best in teaching, be it individually or in a collaborative situation. (EF)

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A Teaching of Reading Book Club

by Marlow Ediger

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A TEACHING OF READING BOOK CLUB

Several elementary schools in the Kirksville, Missouri area in which the writer supervised student and cooperating teachers have a small professional library for classroom teachers. These libraries subscribe to professional journals such as those published by the Reading Teacher, the Language Arts, The Arithmetic Teacher, Science and Children, and Social Education. There are a few teacher education university level textbooks also available for teacher reading. The reading materials are somewhat minimal, but can provide for inservice education of teachers. All schools should have a good professional library for teachers. These libraries should contain audiovisual materials as well as the latest technology to increase teacher skill, efficacy, and professionalism.

One club that needs to be formed, among others, is a Teaching of Reading Club. Here, teachers may select a topic for reading and, perhaps weekly, discuss their findings. The results could be an improved reading curriculum whereby new ideas are tried out and reported back to the Teaching of Reading Club.

Choosing the Topic for Discussion

In selecting what to discuss for the first meeting, elementary school teachers and reading supervisors need assess which area of inservice growth has the greatest need. Thus, the focal point is where students need most assistance in the area of reading instruction. Teachers and supervisors need to evaluate personal strengths and weaknesses to come up with which topic to pursue for the first meeting. A checklist may be passed around for reading teachers to mark the topics of first, second, and third in importance. Or in a discussion, teachers may indicate their preferences. The following areas have been used as a guideline for choosing the first topic to be discussed:

1. diagnosing student needs in phonics instruction.
2. helping students with syllabication problems.
3. using configuration clues to unlock new words.
4. teacher's reading orally to learners to stimulate interest in children's literature.
5. emphasizing the Big Book, echoic reading, repetitive reading, choral reading, and individualized reading. These topics may be subdivided so that the scope is not too broad.
6. stressing the use of Reading Recovery.
7. diagnosing dyslexia in reading.
8. implementing holism in reading for ideas.
9. using critical and creative thinking as well as problem solving approaches in reading subject matter.

10. students' reading in thought units (Ediger, 2000, 210-211).

Each of the above may be delimited, depending upon the needs of participants. For example area #1 above may deal only with initial consonant sounds or, perhaps, students in class have problems with failure to look at the ending of a word to differentiate it from others.

An adequate supply of current teaching of reading materials need to be in the offing.These need to be readily available for use in the Teaching of Reading Book Club. Each student needs to become a fluent reader. No student should fall through the cracks. How high should reading achievement of students become? That is a good question. The bar can always be raised by those outside the framework of actually doing the teaching of reading, as well as by teachers themselves. An interesting goal for readers to achieve is stated for the J. E. B. Stuart High School in Fairfax County, Virginia with 11th grade students reading on grade level (Checkley, 2000). The article does not say if it is for all students, including the mentally handicapped. Even for those below average in ability and above the mentally handicapped category, that is a very high goal to achieve for students. If a high school student upon graduation can read seventh grade reading materials and do seventh grade mathematics, that person can achieve much personally as well as in society. There is, no doubt, about raising the bar in school achievement is here with us, and especially in reading progress/accomplishment. Thus, it is imperative to do the best possible in reading instruction to assist students to achieve as optimally as possible.

Organization of the Club

No officers need be elected unless the Teaching of Reading Book Club wishes to do so. Instead of having officers, the Club may wish to have leadership emerge. Thus in the discussion, one member takes the lead in stating an idea in the teaching of reading followed by another participant, and so on. There are a few guidelines that are important to discuss with participants when leadership emerges or whenever a group/committee is in operation;

1. each member needs to be respected. It is unacceptable behavior for any Club member to be ridiculed or experience the put down approach. A low self concepts can only follow being treated negatively.
2. the ideas from each member need to be treated fairly, honestly, and with definite respect. Individuals will refrain from participating if they are not treated decently.
3. there should be rotation of members in assuming leadership positions within the Club. No person should experience shunning.

4. ideas should circulate among members in the Club when discussing subject matter pertaining to reading instruction. If ideas go from one person to another and then back to the former in a continuous pattern, many will be left out of the mainstream of critical and creative thinking as well as problem solving in the Teaching of Reading Book Club.

5. ideas from the discussion need to be tried out and reported back to the Club on their effectiveness.

6. it is important to stay on the topic being discussed and not waste time on the trivial.

7. recorders should rotate among Club members. A written record should be available to participants on salient ideas discussed. The recorded is good for review purposes and may be placed in a binder for all participants to review. Maximum use should be made of the recorded and discussed ideas. A Club member who does not wish to be a recorder for a session should be respected for hiss/her wishes.

8. individuals possess one or more intelligences and these need to be used as optimally as possible. (See Gardner, 1993, for a discussion of multiple intelligences). In the Teaching of Reading Book Club, there are many talents and abilities that can be used to make optimal use of at each meeting. Interpersonal intelligence is needed to do well in the Club since individuals need to work cooperatively to achieve as well as possible. There are times, too, when intrapersonal intelligence should be used. Thus, an individual by the self may pursue a personal area of concern in learning more about a certain facet in and of the teaching of reading.

9. periodically, consultant assistance should be in the offing. Thus, members in the club will wish to have help in clarification and assistance of whatever is being pursued in the teaching of reading. Consultant assistance should be represented by capable, competent, and professional expertise.

10. assessment of each session and of the total set of meetings needs to be in evidence. Assessment needs to be done in terms of objectives for the Teaching of Reading Book Club (Ediger, 2000, 41-46).

A Community of Learners

A community of learners possesses unity of purpose. Their purpose depends upon the goals being emphasized in the organization. The organization may be formal or informal. The formal/informal continuum comes in degrees. The Teaching of Reading Book Club members need to decide how structured the organization is to be. With leadership emerging, as compared to having elected/appointed officers, the Club may be quite informal. With considerable informality, there can be a greater desire to pursue interpersonal/intrapersonal, rather than

authoritarian, goals in reading instruction. Feeling of quality group dynamics makes for feelings of belonging and harmony. A caring, helpful environment might then be in evidence. Rudeness, shunning, and aloof attitudes become foreign to the organization. Rather, an integrated Club with a definite, clear vision can become an increasing reality.

The total program of reading instruction needs to be assessed in ongoing sessions within the Teaching of Reading Book Club. Areas of concern include grouping students for instruction in the teaching of reading. The entire class of students might then be taught. Purposes need to exist in the teacher's mind in using any plan for grouping students for reading instruction. The class as a whole which is taught emphasizes objectives which all students may achieve. It stresses common ends that are possible for a class of twenty students to attain. Large group instruction in reading should not be used unless each student has a possible chance of achieving goals and being successful in reading achievement. Knowledge, skills, and attitudinal objectives should be in the offing.

Small group instruction also has a definite purpose and that is to assist learner achievement in mastering specifics, such as phonetic elements, in learning to read. Small group instruction may emphasize homogeneous, heterogeneous, or mixed age levels grouping. The kind of grouping involved should assist each student to achieve optimally. It should not be based on ideology whereby one pattern of grouping for instruction is all good and the other is all bad, or one approach is democratic and the other is undemocratic, based on the single perception of a writer/speaker.

In addition to large and small groups of instruction, individualized programs of reading instruction also need to be emphasized. Thus, learners need to have ample opportunities to choose what to read and also how to be evaluated in terms of reading achievement.

A community of learners in the teaching of reading is a must within the Teaching of Reading Book Club. Here, participants learn from each other and try out selected ideas in the teaching of reading in the classroom and provide feedback to Club members. Sharing of ideas and becoming a Club with a vision is a must! These ideals cannot be forced upon members, but must be worked at and achieved intrinsically. Making members feel welcome and a part of the group are vital to stress. Esteem needs should be met by recognizing individual accomplishments. All Club members might then be recognized for doing well. Club members need to realize that charisma alone will not meet standards pertaining to having esteem needs met. Rather, the actual doing, developing, and accomplishing in the teaching of reading is what needs to be recognized. Public school students need the best reading program possibly. All facets of the reading curriculum need to be

studied, analyzed, and the best workable ideas implemented (See Ediger, 2000, 28-34).

Reading Across the Curriculum

To guide more optimal progress in reading, teachers should stress the importance of students achieving well in all curriculum areas. Reading across the curriculum should become a motto. This does not mean that a curriculum area, such as science, becomes a reading class. Hands on approaches in science learning, as well as reading related subject matter in these ongoing units of study, is important. If students are to work as scientists do in a laboratory, then reading is an important avenue of learning and as a means of checking/evaluating hypotheses. In the social studies, most students read from the basal, library books, and primary/secondary sources, among others. Jarolimek (1990) wrote: "Literature and literary materials should play an important part in social studies instruction because they convey so well the affective dimension of human experience. The realism achieved through vivid portrayals in works of literature stirs the imagination of the young reader and helps develop a feeling for and an identification with the topic being studied." Literature and literary works should play an important role in all curriculum areas and within each unit of study.

In mathematics, word problems, numerals, library books on arithmetic, and story problems written by learners, among others, emphasize the vital importance of reading.Thus, among the different curriculum areas, students need to read for a variety of purposes (Ediger, 1999, 37-46).

Reading teachers then need to emphasize

1. the importance of reading for meaning in diverse curriculum areas.
2. comprehension of salient ideas in narrative, expository, and recreational subject matter.
3. students becoming independent in recognizing unknown words.
4. development of student interest in reading content on different genres, topics, and for a variety of purposes.
5. a philosophy of reading across the curriculum.
6. individual as well as group endeavors in the teaching of reading.
7. sustained silent reading (SSR) whereby everyone in school reads at a designated time to provide models for students to emulate.
8. a literature rich environment for learners so that the latter may choose sequential reading materials on their very own.
9. students relating content and books read to the ongoing unit being taught.
10. a comprehensive program of assessment designed to provide

feedback to teachers and learners in order to improve sequence in the reading curriculum.

The Basal Reader

The basal reader has its supporters as well as its opponents. The author supports the use of basals. These need to be carefully selected in terms of desired criteria. Basals have been carelessly chosen without teacher involvement. That is a ridiculous situation. After all, it will be the teachers who will implement the reading curriculum. Basals need to be selected based on the following criteria:

1. they capture student interest.
2. they have a good manual for teachers to use with suggestions for possible objectives for learners to achieve, a variety of learning opportunities so that students may achieve the objectives, and diverse learning opportunities to asses if objectives are being attained.
3. they may be used effectively to harmonize with state mandated objectives.
4. they may be used by teachers to instill learner purpose in reading.
5. they may be used well to make provision for different achievement levels of students in the classroom setting.
6. they may assist each learner to achieve as optimally as possible.
7. they may be used to develop a lifelong feeling for reading on the part of the present day student in the school setting.
8. they may stress creative and critical thinking as well as problem solving.
9. they offer teachers security in developing a quality reading curriculum.
10. they emphasize flexibility in use by teachers of reading (See Ediger, 2000, 503-505).

The Teaching of Reading Book Club can do much to assist in choosing a series of basals possessing merit. They may study and try out the best means of recommended procedures in reading instruction. The basal is a neutral device. Its quality use depends upon those teachers who implement methods of instruction which assist each student to achieve as optimally as possible. It is up to the reading teacher to make maximum use of the basal and its manual to do a good job of teaching students. It takes much time to develop a reading curriculum from scratch, unless an individualized reading program were emphasized with the best of children's literature available for student choice to select from and read. Both the basal and individualized reading approaches may be stressed in meeting student needs in the

reading curriculum. New approaches must always be studied by reading teachers in the Teaching of Reading Book Club. Adaptability and flexibility are two concepts that need to be used in developing materials suitable for reading instruction.

Thus, the Teaching of Reading Book Club may study and incorporate what is deemed good and excellent from the Big Book Approach, Reading Recovery Methods, echoic reading, choral reading, repeated reading, student's developing a basic sight vocabulary for reading, assisting students to achieve readiness for reading a given selection (by studying the related illustrations, among other AV aids, to receive background information; seeing the new words in print prior to reading; using these words in meaningful sentences; and having reasons and purposes for reading the new selection).

The Teaching of Reading Book Club, in time and sequentially, needs to become a community of learners in studying, assessing, and trying out new, recommended approaches in reading instruction. Knowing how these trial runs in new procedures work in improving the reading curriculum is a must. The Club can indeed work well though collaboration, cooperation, and unity of vision. Purpose for meeting regularly and desiring to improve the reading curriculum from what is to what should be are admirable goals. Thus, a normative approach in the teaching of reading involves seeking, searching, and finding that which works best in teaching, be it individually or in a collaborative situation.

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